

## HOW IT ALL BEGAN

**Editor's Note:** *It seems appropriate, at the close of our 25th Anniversary Year, to publish for the present membership some significant documentation of the Society's beginnings. Here then, a series of letters which appeared in 1948 in what is now known as "Audio" magazine, and which played their part in generating interest in forming such a professional body as the Audio Engineering Society.*

### Audio Association?

Sir:

After receiving the first few issues of your new magazine, I must say that I believe you are serving a much neglected field in a highly adequate manner.

Now that the audio engineer has been dignified by a specialized publication which will tend to draw the members of the field together, is it not time for him to have an organization of his own?

I have in mind an association similar in function and purpose to the I.R.E. and S.M.P.T.E. in their respective fields.

I will be glad to correspond with anyone interested in this matter.

*Frank E. Sherry, Jr.  
705½ W. San Antonio Street  
Victoria, Texas*

*What do our readers think?—Ed.*

### Audio Engineering Society

Sir:

In the last issue, Mr. Frank E. Sherry, Jr. suggested that audio engineering had grown to the point where it needed a professional society of its own.

A group of us, long active in broadcasting and recording, feel the same way he does. Audio engineering will be unhampered only when it has a society devoted exclusively to its needs—controlled by, and run only to benefit, the audio engineer.

We have been discussing this matter for several months and are preparing to hold an organization meeting.

Will those interested in such a society please write the undersigned, giving the following information:

Name  
Mailing Address  
Company  
Title or nature of work

We will notify you of the meeting date.

*C. J. LeBel  
307 Riverside Drive  
New York 25, New York*

### Audio Society Activities

Sir:

A letter from C. J. LeBel (published in the January issue of this magazine) explained that a group of audio

engineers were giving serious consideration to the formation of a professional organization for the advancement of the science and art of audio engineering. Your readers will be interested to know that this proposed Audio Engineering Society is organized. Discussions among a group of well-known audio engineers have already been held, and this group has appointed C. J. LeBel to be acting chairman and Norman C. Pickering to be acting secretary to bring the aims of this new organization to interested engineers and technicians. Those who have not been reached directly are invited to write the Acting Secretary for further information.

The formal organization meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 17th, at 8:00 p.m., at the RCA Victor studios at 155 E. 24th Street, New York City, at which organizational details will be settled and temporary officers elected. The Society has been fortunate in obtaining Dr. Harry F. Olson of RCA as the speaker at the first technical meeting, to be held Thursday, March 11th at 8:00 p.m., at 155 E. 24th St., New York City. Dr. Olson will discuss some specific problems associated with high quality sound reproduction and present an interesting demonstration.

The need for an Audio Engineering Society has long been felt. It is certain to succeed in its aims if firmly supported by audio engineers and technicians. It will furnish a medium for presentation of new ideas in audio, discussion of which will unify thinking along these lines.

*Norman C. Pickering  
Oceanside, New York*

### Comments on the AES

Sir:

In a recent letter to the Editor, Mr. Frank E. Sherry has suggested the formation of some sort of an Audio Engineering Society. I wish to enter a strong dissent to this proposal, as I believe it will not further the advancement of this field.

The principal reason for this view may be seen from a consideration of the large number of technical groups now extant, each for a narrow field. Nevertheless, this has resulted in duplication of effort, competition for speakers and papers, and a multiplicity of meetings which put a considerable drain on the time of the practicing engineer who must overlook no new developments. A partial solution has been the formation of Technical Societies Councils, as in Chicago and other cities, with a monthly list of meetings made available. I feel that our efforts must be directed toward consolidation and centralization rather than division of energies. A unified group can easily foster sub-groups for specific purposes, and yet retain the advantages of a parent-body, which is able, by virtue of its prestige and size, to present with great effectiveness the viewpoint of its members to other groups, be they engineering, civic or legislative.

Since audio engineering has become a large enough field to merit representation, I wish to propose that those interested consider the Acoustical Society of America.

## HOW IT ALL BEGAN

This group is not purely scientific and academic, but has a diversified membership which includes audio engineers, musicians, broadcast engineers, and sound technicians as well as professors (who are in the minority). The Society has recently broadened its membership requirements to include all those interested in acoustics, with more classes of membership; moreover, it has provided for the establishment of regional sections whose primary interest is simply to be the advancement of acoustics. I wish to urge that those interested in audio engineering consider affiliation with the national Society as a valuable means of avoiding adding to the present profusion of specialized groups and at the same time retaining the advantages of national representation. Of course, the particular program undertaken by any such regional group will depend on the desires of its members, the national Society merely offering direction and advice with rather loose control.

In closing, it may be mentioned that a Chicago Section of the Acoustical Society of America is in the process of formation.

*Vincent Salmon, Physicist  
6220 So. Moody Avenue  
Chicago, Ill.*

Sir:

I want to thank you for aiding in the formation of an Audio Engineering Society.

Because of a letter which was written by Frank E. Sherry, Jr. of Victoria, Texas, and appearing in your December issue, I was put in touch with C. J. LeBel and Norman Pickering, both of New York City, and formers of the Society. It is with a deep satisfaction to learn that at last something will be done about nationally recognizing the Audio Engineer in his own right. I still have on hand Issue No. 1 of the original Sound magazine issued prior to the war—July, 1941, to be exact.

I am looking forward to the first meeting of the Society with as much hope and anticipation as a kid does the night before Christmas. Thank you again for any aid you might give the group in its initial phases. Thank you also, tho in advance, for the next 12 issues, which I know will be just as jam-packed with information as the last issues.

*Jack Hartley  
88 Diamond Bridge Avenue  
Hawthorne, N.J.*

Dear Editor:

In the December 1947 issue, Mr. F. E. Sherry, Jr. raises the question as to whether the time has come for the audio engineer to form an association of his own. I think not.

It is true that the existing national organizations have not, to date, recognized the existence of audio engineers nor have they given them a voice, as a group, in the affairs of their societies. However, insofar as the Institute of Radio Engineers is concerned, considerable progress has been made towards correcting this situation. For example, as announced in some detail in the January 1948 issue of the Proc. I.R.E., a Committee on Professional Groups has been formed (pg. 105) with the view towards the establishment of groups "within the Institute membership to promote meetings in specialized fields" (pg. 106). In addition, other group activities, such as

promoting papers in their field, are contemplated. One of the groups specifically mentioned is "audio."

Of equal importance is the establishment by the I.R.E. of an Audio and Video Technical Committee. Thus, for the first time in the history of the Institute, these fields are being recognized in their own right and not as an adjunct of another branch of the science.

From an industry viewpoint, audio engineering is also beginning to receive the recognition that is its due. For example, the Radio Manufacturers Association has several active committees on audio facilities covering broadcasting, sound reinforcement and home receiver applications. Also, the American Standards Association has committees concerned with various phases of standardization work in the audio field.

It seems to me that the audio and video engineer can best further progress in his chosen field by taking an active and constructive part in the affairs of existing organizations. I cannot see the need, at this time, of an association of audio engineers any more than I believe there should be an Institute of Sonar Engineers, or of Radar Engineers, or Frequency Allocation Engineers, to name but a few.

*Howard A. Chinn  
Chief Audio Engineer  
Columbia Broadcasting System  
New York City*

Sir:

Through Audio Engineering I have learned of activities in New York to bring together those who are interested mainly in the audio field. Mr. C. J. LeBel has suggested that it might be possible to determine the extent of interest along these lines in the Philadelphia area, if a letter similar to his were published in Audio Engineering.

I will be glad to act as a clearing house to receive the names of those in the Philadelphia Area who would care to look into the matter if they will send a post card to me at the address below. Information of any activities will be sent to all sending in their name, address and field of audio engineering.

*William P. West  
522 Arbutus St.  
Philadelphia 19, Pa.*

### From the Audio Engineering Society

We have been flooded with mail from all over the country, and it appears certain that local sections will be formed in a number of cities. In order to help audio engineers get together, we would be happy to act as a clearing house for such operations.

In response to interest already shown, we especially solicit response from the following large centers: Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Dallas, Denver, Detroit, Indianapolis, Pittsburgh, San Antonio, San Francisco, Washington, D.C.

When writing, please send the following information: Name, mailing address, company, title or nature of work.

Letters should be addressed to the Acting Secretary:

Norman G. Pickering

Acting Secretary

Audio Engineering Society

Oceanside, New York

## NEED FOR THE AUDIO ENGINEERING SOCIETY

Engineers engaged in the field of audio are generally agreed that there is a definite advantage to a professional society as a means of disseminating information and promoting intelligent study of the problems pertaining to their interests, but there has been considerable doubt that their field has been covered adequately. Audio engineering has been on the fringes of three existing societies without actually being the central interest of any one of them. Because of this, there has been sporadic discussion concerning the formation of a new professional society specifically devoted to audio engineering.

The most recent activity in this connection has been carried on simultaneously in New York and Hollywood. In the East, the interest is high among many of the engineers in the audio profession, but no embryo organization with a technical background has existed as a central meeting ground. The Sapphire Group in Hollywood has attracted audio engineers in that locality, and is a nucleus of activity in the West.

The creation of a new professional society is consistent with the example set by other specialized scientific and technical groups, where such course has been found necessary as a result of the inevitable broadening of scope of predecessor organizations.

Audio engineering has broadened to the point where a number of separate branches of the field deserve recognition, yet due to the lack of a specialized organization of engineers and researchers, the advances in the art have not become as widely known as they should be.

For example:

1. Speech input system design: Little of a detailed nature has thus far been published and practically no standardization has been achieved.

2. Studio design and use: Papers heretofore published have covered fundamental studio methods of utilizing those acoustical conditions. The problems of application and operation from the practical viewpoint have largely been left unreported.

3. Disc recording: The gap between the published

material and actual practice is so great as to be incredible to one not actually in this field.

4. Tape and wire recording: The research aspect has been covered in the literature, but here again there is a big difference between the published information and actual engineering practice.

5. Hearing aids: Published information has not kept pace with engineering design practice. It is possible that this is due to the secrecy of a new art, but it may also be due to lack of encouragement of engineering papers.

6. Public address systems: The design of large, high-quality systems requires as much skill as that required to lay out a broadcast station, yet virtually nothing has been published on the subject. There are 1500 men in the high-quality field, and with encouragement many papers could be made available.

7. High quality home reproduction: The divergence between the ideal as discussed by Fletcher and associates years ago, and current practice is too great. It merits discussion.

8. Wired music systems: There are problems in this field which warrant discussion.

9. Telephone engineering: There has been very little material published on the aspects of this art which concern the broadcaster or wired music engineer, and practically nothing in any society journal.

### Society Obligations

A professional society has obligations to the art as well as to the members. Among the duties it should assume are the following:

1. Develop technical and public appreciation of the importance of audio engineering as a separate profession, with its own distinct background requirements.

2. Foster educational presentation of subjects basic to audio engineering.

3. Foster research on subjects basic to audio engineering.

## NEED FOR THE AUDIO ENGINEERING SOCIETY

4. Foster periodic audio engineering meetings. (It is proposed to start with seven to ten meetings per year in each of two or three cities.)

5. Provide a facility for publication of papers.

6. Represent audio interests in the matter of engineering standards before the American Standards Association, the F.C.C., the R.M.A., and others of like nature.

7. Operate an employment register for qualified audio engineers, similar to that operated by the American Institute of Physics for physicists.

### Discussion

A number of professional societies (and journals) have been nominally available for papers in the previously listed fields. Unfortunately, what is everybody's responsibility is no one's, and so audio engineering as a profession has had no real sponsorship at all. Likewise, there has been no one to encourage interchange of knowledge—presentation of the papers which are the lifeblood of any science.

Encouragement of publication has been badly needed, for the professional society journal situation has not been such as to attract the average audio engineer. One society journal covers the motion picture field, but most motion picture practice (optics, for example) is of little interest to the audio engineer in other fields. Another society journal has an excellent research and acoustical physicist's viewpoint, but one which has not attracted the engineer. The third society journal has attempted the difficult feat of covering the entire electronic field, making more than occasional attention to a particular subject impractical. As a result, two recent audio papers showed a lapse of sixteen and seventeen months between

the first submission of manuscript and publication, and the fastest action seems about twelve months.

### Conclusions

Since the obligations and duties mentioned in the foregoing are not fulfilled by any existing society, it appears that an independent society is now timely—one which is headed by audio engineers of character and run by audio engineers themselves. It has been claimed that there are already too many technical organizations. This argument will not stand close examination, and may be challenged on the basis of what test is best to judge whether there are too many organizations. By the test of operation, there are presently too few, for when too many diverse fields are combined into a group, a society becomes unwieldy. The obligations of encouraging college courses in the fundamentals of audio have not been fulfilled by any organization, and most existing courses in electronics are heavily weighted with radio engineering material.

These objections can be met only by a society and a journal which are 100% one. Any other procedure diverts most of our resources to the support of activities which only indirectly benefit or interest us. The physicists learned this long ago, and today they have societies for every field of interest.

**Note:** *The above editorial appeared in "Audio Engineering" (now "Audio") in its March 1948 issue and was prepared by the then Organization Committee for the formation of the Audio Engineering Society. The Committee was comprised of John D. Colvin, C. J. LeBel, C. G. McProud, Norman C. Pickering and Chester O. Rackey. (Mr. LeBel died in 1966 and Mr. Rackey only this year.)*